



E1-5831

GREGORY E. STRONG

Ms. Victoria Rutson
Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
395 E st. SW
Washinton D. C.
20423-0001

January 25, 2008

RE: Finance Docket No: 35095 (Port Mackenzie Rail Extension Project/Alaska)

Dear Ms. Rutson,

August 2006 was a typical August for Horseshoe Lake residents as it began to rain, and rain it did for thirty days straight. On September 2, 2006 the water level of the lake had risen by 18.75 inches. This extreme increase in water level caused docks to become totally submerged and shoreline erosion appeared imminent. This was a year of continuous heavy rainfall, but it should not be confused with what is commonly referred to as a "100 year flood."

This flooding occurred with the absence of any man made obstruction between Horseshoe Lake and the Little Susitna River, which serves as its natural drainage corridor. The establishment of a rail bed to support a rail line would be the equivalent to the construction of an earthen dam prohibiting the flow of both surface and sub surface water to the Little Susitna River. The Little Susitna River removes water from the numerous lakes in the immediate area.

The attached Exhibit (A) illustrates the following:

- A. The Horseshoe Lake area drains into the Little Susitna River (Drainage), which is outlined in RED
- B. The LIGHT BLUE area around Horseshoe Lake(s) indicates that the lakes in and of themselves serve as an immediate, yet transitional watershed for the area
- C. The BLACK line reflects the proposed Houston South railroad corridor

The proposed Houston South route bisects the natural drainage of water into Horseshoe Lake and the immediate lakes that surround it, as well as their subsequent discharge into the Little Susitna River. It takes little imagination to consider what an earthen rail bed would do to watershed drainage in the Horseshoe Lake area. Depending on the time of year the water would rise you could potentially witness:

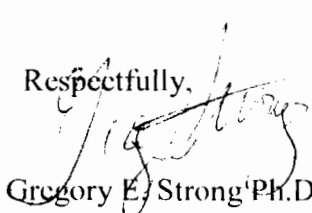
- A. The destruction of waterfowl nests
- B. The destruction of salmon and trout spawning beds
- C. Significant shore erosion effecting the food chain and reproductive waterfowl and fish habitat

There will be those that may suggest that such ecological disruptions could be avoided by placing the rail line on an elevated trestle. The difficulty with that suggestion is that the length of construction of that line would need to be at least 5 miles long in order to not confuse the natural "lakes" drainage into themselves as shown in LIGHT BLUE on the exhibit. That elevated trestle would be constructed along the well studied Castle Mountain Fault line. Such a solution seems to be a clear "recipe for disaster".

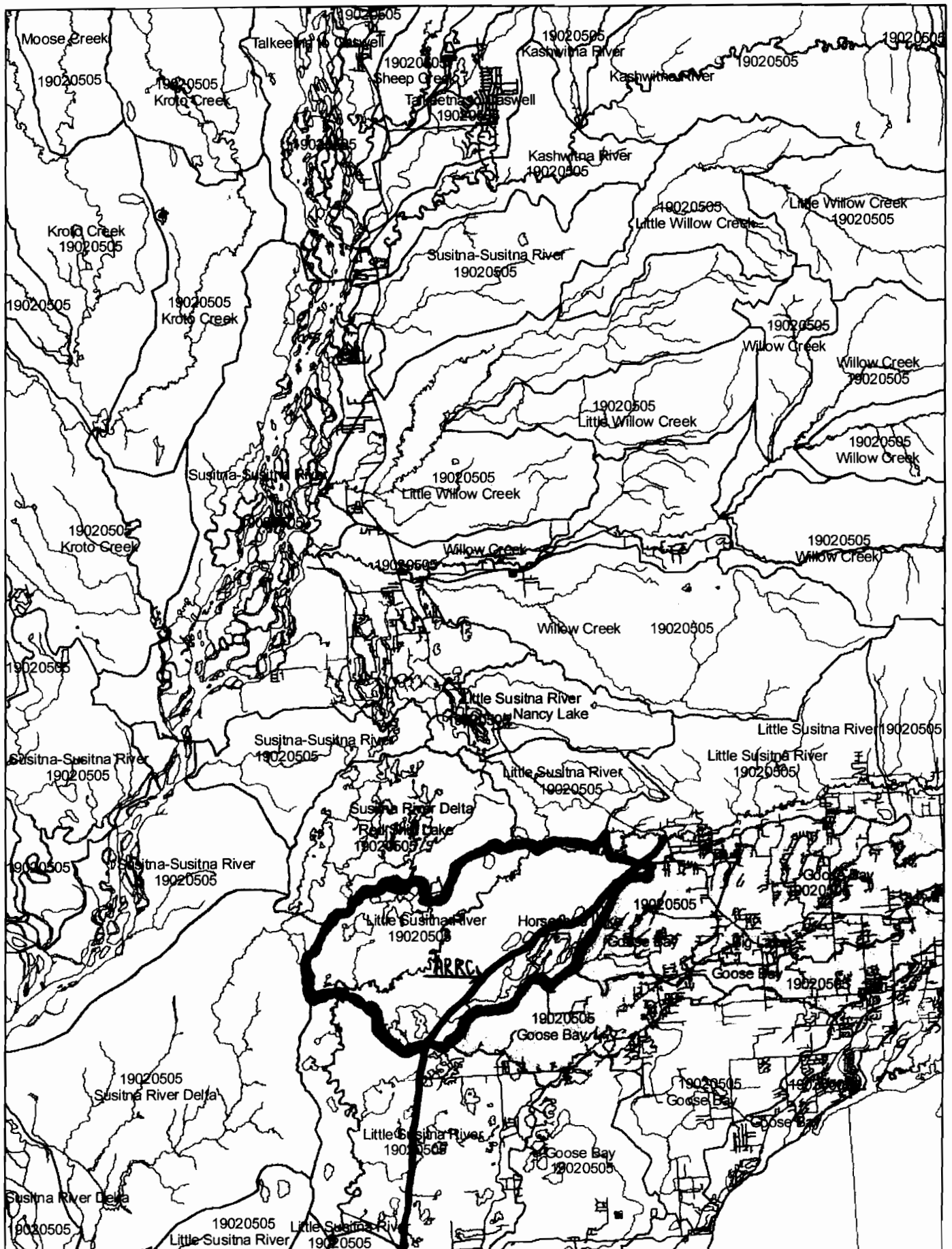
Yet others may suggest a series of culverts to allow for the continuous drainage of water to the West. Granted, on a "good day" these culverts may work. On a "bad day" they may become dammed with ice, or the numerous dead spruce trees lying on the ground that are the aftermath of the Big Lake (Miller's Reach) Fire. Some of these millions of dead trees could choke off the flow of water potentially resulting in the ecological destruction suggested earlier.

The Houston South route contains poor soils, extensive wetlands, is located directly on top of an active earthquake fault line, and bisects the area's 10,000 year old watershed. These facts are undisputed, hence, let me suggest to you and the numerous additional parties involved with this discussion that the Houston South should NOT be worthy of further consideration.

Respectfully,


Gregory E. Strong Ph.D.

Attachments(1)



0 5,000 10,000 20,000 Meters

Exhibit A